

UNCLAS HARARE 000594

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR AF/PDPA FOR DALTON, MITCHELL AND SIMS
IRAQ PD FOR SMITH, PINESS AND ROOKARDS
NSC FOR JENDAYI FRAZER
LONDON FOR GURNEY
PARIS FOR NEARY
NAIROBI FOR PFLAUMER

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: PREL KPAO KMDR ZI IZ

SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION WAR WITH IRAQ; HARARE

¶1. Over the 3/22-23 weekend, Zimbabwean newspapers dedicated major acreage to comment on the war to disarm Iraq. The tone is critical. Excerpts follow:

¶2. Under headline "U. N. in tatters" the pro-government weekly "The Sunday Mirror" (03/23) comments:

"The decision by the United States and its allies to launch a military attack on Iraq without the endorsement of the United Nations has seriously undermined the world organization's integrity. . . . Prominent global leaders have argued the case for a peaceful resolution of the Iraq question within the U.N. framework but, unfortunately, U.S. President George W. Bush and his British and Spanish allies have stubbornly refused to budge, choosing instead to plunge the world body into a potentially fatal credibility crisis. The ongoing attacks on Iraq are in open defiance of the U.N. Charter and customary international law and, therefore, constitute unlawful acts of aggression. . . . The unilateral decision to strike Iraq by the U.S. has introduced a dangerous precedent in the conduct of international relations. . . ."

¶3. Under headline "Most unpopular war" the independent daily "The Daily News" (02/22) comments:

"The United States' war against Iraq. . . is probably the most unpopular war a U.S. President has ever initiated. . . . The U.N. will be criticized for a long time for not coming up with a forthright condemnation of the U.S. and Britain for playing the Lone Ranger and Tonto. The hope around the world is that there will be few civilian casualties and minimum destruction of Iraq, already reeling from U.N. sanctions imposed after the Gulf War of the 1990s. Saddam Hussein may be a warmonger and a dictator, but dialogue ought to have been given a chance. There was no cause for the U.S. to decide on war regardless of the potential for inciting reprisals against its allies and another 11 September outrage on its own. All that will be on George W. Bush's head."

SULLIVAN